



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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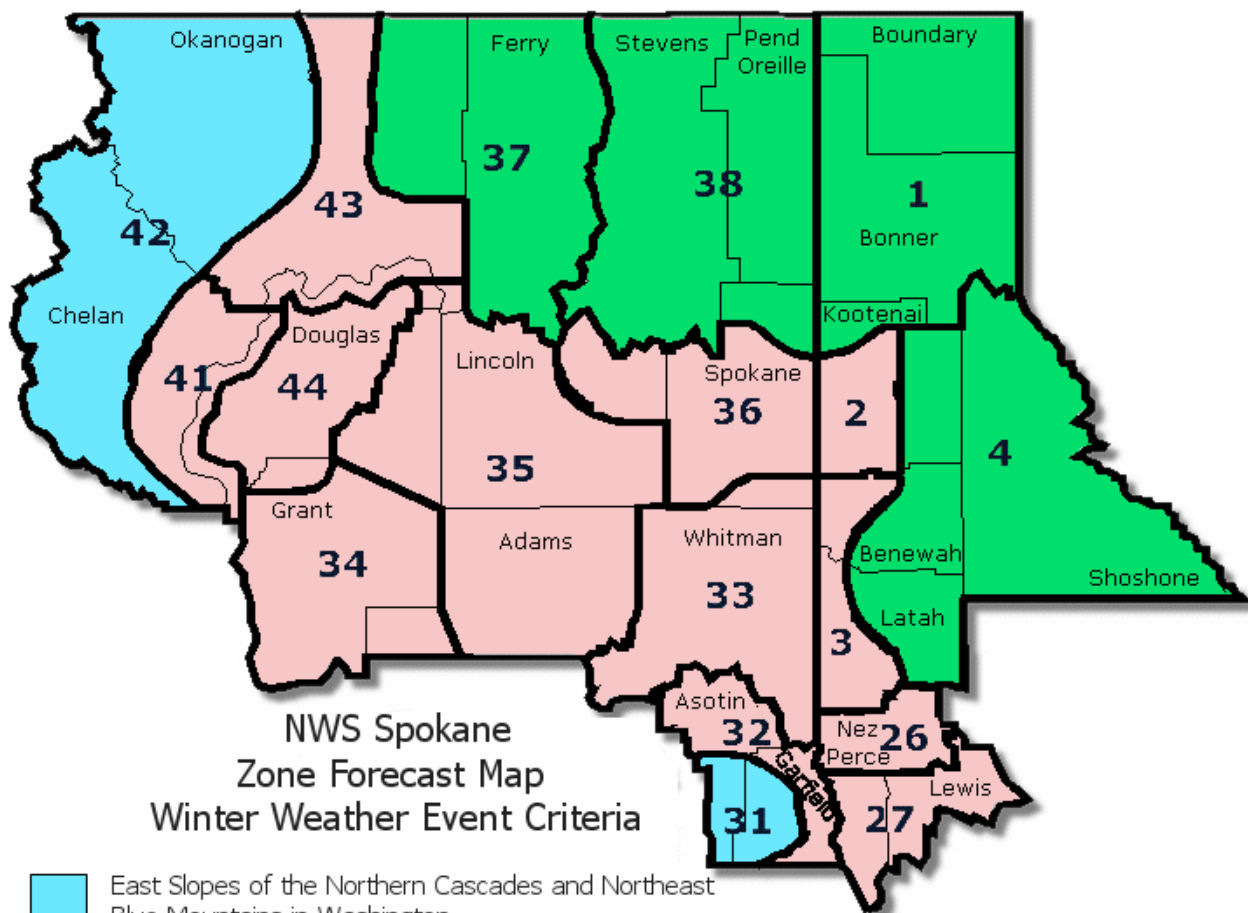
Spokane, WA 99224

Memo To: Our Media and Emergency Management Partners
From: National Weather Service Spokane
Date: August 26, 2006
RE: New Winter Weather Watch, Warning and Advisory Criteria

Background: NWS Spokane, like other forecast offices throughout the region, uses various criteria to formulate and verify winter weather watches, warnings and advisories. Criteria are established for many types of winter weather including: ice accumulation, freezing rain, heavy snow and blowing snow and blizzard conditions. Forecasts during the winter season are among our most challenging, especially snow amounts over our region's varied and complex terrain. NWS Spokane forecasters use specific snow amounts and even times of year when considering hoisting a winter weather highlight. These criteria vary depending upon the area and elevation. Following an event, detailed verification results are compiled based upon these criteria.

Proposal: In an effort to simplify our winter weather event criteria, NWS Spokane recently conducted an extensive evaluation of current policies regarding winter weather watches, warnings and advisories. Based upon our findings, we have proposed new, updated criteria that are summarized in the tables below. However, before we proceed to the final review process, we would very much appreciate any feedback you may have regarding these updated criteria. We plan to implement the new policies on October 1st, in time for the upcoming winter of 2006-07. Please feel free to contact John Livingston at 509-244-0110 x221 or via email: <john.livingston@noaa.gov>.

Note: Criteria are established for each forecast zone (see map below) and, in some cases, they are different for lower and higher elevations within each zone.



East Slopes of the Northern Cascades and Northeast Blue Mountains in Washington.

Okanogan Highlands, Northeast Mountains and Valleys in Washington, and in Idaho the Northern Panhandle and Central Panhandle Mountains and Valleys.

Lower Elevation Zones of the Wenatchee Area, Okanogan Valley, Columbia Basin, Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Areas, the Washington and Idaho Palouse, Lewiston/Clarkston Areas and the Camas Prairie.

<i>East Slopes of the Northern Cascades and Northeast Blue Mountains in Washington (WA Zones 31 and 42)</i>				
All Elevations	Warnings		Advisories	
	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>
Standard	8+ inches	12+ inches	5-7 inches	7-11 inches
Early or Late Season between April 1-Oct 31	4+ inches	6+ inches	2-3 inches	3-5 inches
The previous warning criteria for the East Slopes were 12+ inches in 12 hours and 18+ inches in 24 hours. We have established 12 hour warning criteria for the Northeast Blues, where there was none before. And once again early and late season criteria are established.				

<i>Okanogan Highlands (and valleys), the Northeast Mountains (and valleys) in Washington, and in Idaho the Northern Panhandle and the Central Panhandle Mountains (and valleys).</i>				
Above 3000' (Mountains)	Warnings		Advisories	
	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>
Standard	8+ inches	12+ inches	None	None
Early or Late Season between April 1-Oct 31	4+ inches	6+ inches	None	None
Below 3000' (Valleys)	Warnings		Advisories	
	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>
Standard	4+ inches	6+ inches	2-3 inches	3-5 inches
Early or Late Season between April 1-Oct 31	4+ inches	6+ inches	2-3 inches	3-5 inches
Early and late season criteria are established. Otherwise, no significant changes. We will continue the policy of no advisories for the mountains to avoid issuing warnings for the valleys and advisories for the mountains in the same zone.				

<i>Lower Elevation Zones of the Wenatchee Area, Okanogan Valley, Columbia Basin, Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Areas, the Washington and Idaho Palouse, Lewiston and Clarkston Areas and the Camas Prairie</i>				
All Elevations	Warnings		Advisories	
	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>	<u>12 hour</u>	<u>24 hour</u>
Standard	4+ inches	6+ inches	2-3 inches	3-5 inches
Early or Late Season between April 1-Oct 31	4+ inches	6+ inches	2-3 inches	3-5 inches
None, except to clarify that early and late season event criteria are the same as other times of the cool season.				